

On one's videoperformance in Petersburg

by Ana Sol Alderete

Here I am writting after my own name. A long time has passed since the last time I did it. Even though my actual name means nothing to the person reading this words, it is important starting from that point, to move on towards the lost future. I am wrtitting from Cordoba, a large city in Argentina, about Petersburg, a major city in Russia.

The first time I visited Russia was in 2007, however I was captivated by it long earlier, since my childhood. Furthermore, again captivated then by my fantasy on the country, and as soon as I left it, absolutely nostalgic. It was all about the power of a seductive idea, and about the famous letter my sister sent me: "Now Russia is exotic and actual".

On 2012's northern summer, I went back to Russia because of a social project, related to the place I inhabit here at home. This is why I write about my own name. In this third visit, unlike the first and second ones, my name was, to me, no more and no better than the one of a given organization, *casa13*.

At first glance, I did artistic research in Petersburg. However, the social experiment in which I end up, a symbolic knot, it is the remarkable thing. I meant to create a knot of meanings and definitions in Petersburg. A bunch of lies, a provocation and, at the same time, the most truthful thing I could ever tell to russians.

Below, an imaginary dialogue about the resulting video-performance is wirtten, in order to narrate how the knot worked.

Two voices are needed for telling this story. The one of my memories (V1) and the one for all of my interlocutors (V2)

V1 As soon as I arrived, two very difficult questions were given to me.

V2 *Who could be your reference for "political role in arts and in society, and in the intellectual realm" -in Petersburg?*

Do you know the situation here?

V1: The answer for the first one should had been "no one", because many people claimed not to understand the idea of *reference*, while many other artists claimed not to be interested in *politics* nor *political roles* and, at last, some others, unlike the previous ones, seemed not to be integrated into Petersburg.

The answer for the second question should had been "no".

Do I know the situation anywhere? Can I act on the basis of what I know about the situation?

To say "I strongly believe" in Russia has effects. One of those was that my name returned to me. I was asked whether I am a feminist or not, an atheist or not; I was asked if, in Argentina, I am a young woman or not, an artist or not. And the questions were given to me, not to *casa13*. These are not, in my experience, usual problems in Córdoba, nor in Argentina. At some point, the so called russian non-creative vision of life gave me something else to gaze at, and then I desired to write.

V2 (this text was written by me and read it out loud by others)

I can still recall the first time I thought I wanted to live in Russia.

I was very young, it was 1990 or 1991.

I asked my mother (well, maybe she also was young by then) why the rich people don't give their money away, so that the poor people have the money they need, so that nobody is poor and nobody is rich.

And my mother answered: because if it so happens, we would be living in a communist country, and there are no communist countries left except for Cuba and Russia.

Because that would be a feminist country. There is not a feminist country except for Russia.

Because we would be living in a free culture country, and there are not free culture countries except for Russia.

Because that would be an atheistic country, and there are not atheistic countries except for Russia.

Because it would be revolutionary, because it would be generous.

Later on, Russia has always been a kind of memory of the future that makes me dizzy.

V1 Do I have a name for what I did there? Was it a performance, yet I performed nothing myself? Trying to solve such a problematic thing, I proposed this kind of credit for the videoperformance:

"This video was desired and provoked by Ana Sol Alderete in Saint Petersburg, Russia, September 2012".

And I also explored the idea of provocation:

"The aim of this video is to cause a visual effect: to produce context by organizing images and sounds".

I once wrote a very elusive text, where I was trying to express ideas that I didn't want to become intellectual capital. Texts of this kind, as long as they don't pretend to be poetic, are the ones I appreciate the most. The words I use for this are "intuition" and one of its adjectives, "intuitive". For example, how can one express the idea of corruption not telling anybody that he or she is a corrupt person?

The videoperformance I produced in Petersburg was meant to deal with intuitive ideas about self-organization of artists, corruption of artists, the conservative and the revolutionary itself, and the intellectual realm in Saint Petersburg. How? By using my voice and everybody else's body. In *casa13* I am a host for others, in the Fields of Mars I tried to make them to be my hosts and make Petersburg be my house.

Grouping us, is it our aim to change the way citizens see a given city? Can we place such an ambition in our horizon?

V1 When doing artistic research in Petersburg, I considered grouping as a mechanism to accomplish a symbolic goal.

V2 Exhibitions harm contemporary art.

V1 Back to the issue of names, personal names. I find very hard to create texts I could say would be useful for somebody else, specially when they are dedicated to understand complex experiences, my experience as my person and my experience as an organization's member.

V2 I want to stop feeling like I am nowhere.

V1 Whom are these words for?

V2 What use of these words could be done by others?

V1 When I say "to make a use" I mean: "to do something on one's own that goes far beyond what I could imagine, and therefore, what I could do". Like writing your own poem, or shooting your own video.